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Career development in language services

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In the overall context of the Secretary-General's strategy for the management of human resources of the Organization, the purpose of career development is to build and maintain a highly competent, multi-skilled and versatile international civil service capable of meeting the Organization's present and future needs and to meet the development needs and career aspirations of individual staff members. Accordingly, career development prospects should be considered in a broad sense, not only in terms of promotion opportunities, but also in terms of the potential offered to the staff for broadening their professional experience and having access to development opportunities. The promotion possibilities for language staff at the P-3 and P-4 levels vary according to their function and the size of the organizational unit to which they are assigned. While opportunities for reaching the P-5 level in language services also vary, they are, overall, limited. In addition to the creation or the upgrading of posts, a number of non-budgetary measures can be taken to address problems which language service staff may face in relation to their career development, including measures aimed at increased mobility between language functions and between duty stations; improving training facilities; and moving towards a global administration of conference services staffing tables at all duty stations. The following is proposed: to undertake a comprehensive review of post gradings in the context of the preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002–2003; to continue the new experience of holding common examinations for the recruitment of staff for written language functions; to pursue consultations on the modalities for establishing a limited system of managed reassignment to duty stations away from Headquarters; and to initiate discussions at the senior level on the feasibility of a more coordinated administration of staffing tables for language services at various duty stations.

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I. Introduction

1. By paragraph 29 of its resolution 53/208 B of 18 December 1998, the General Assembly expressed regret for the difficulties being faced by language service staff in relation to their career development. In paragraph 30 of the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly at its fifty-third session analysing such problems as may exist related to career development in language services and taking into account the fact that the numbers and grade levels of staff should be commensurate with the needs of the Organization as well as the fact that requirements differ between languages as well as between duty stations. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

2. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report on human resources management (A/53/342), the purpose of career development is to build and maintain a highly competent, multi-skilled and versatile international civil service capable of meeting the Organization's present and future needs and, in so doing, to meet the development needs and career aspirations of individual staff members. The Organization's career development policy is founded on the principle that responsibility for career development is shared: by the Organization, which must provide structural support and a framework of opportunities; by managers, who must support their staff's development and career progress; and by staff members, who must be committed to continuous professional growth. Accordingly, career development should not be equated solely with the existence of promotion opportunities. Although the latter constitutes one element, such factors as potential for broadening of professional experience and access to training and development opportunities should also be considered.

3. A United Nations staff member who enters the Professional category at the P-2 or P-3 level, in most cases after passing an examination, may, in the course of a career, aspire to two or three promotions and some reassignments, which may or may not involve relocation, as well as a number of meaningful training or retraining opportunities. A staff member following such a pattern could be considered to have had a satisfactory career. On that basis, a review of career development in language services entails a comparison between language staff and the staff of the Secretariat at large in terms of possibilities for their careers to follow such a pattern, which should be viewed not as a desirable statistical average, but as a possible goal for a staff member at the beginning of his or her professional career.

4. Consistent with that approach, the present report provides an analysis of the current staffing table situation and grade structure at the three larger conference centres of the United Nations (New York, Geneva and Vienna) and at other duty stations with smaller language units (Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Beirut and Santiago). Based on the findings derived from that analysis, the report then focuses on possible solutions to the current problems relating to promotion prospects and to other aspects of career development in language services.

II. Analysis of current staffing table situation and grade structure

5. The overwhelming majority of the language staff join the Organization at the P-2 or P-3 level after passing a competitive examination. This is the case for translators, editors, interpreters, verbatim reporters and copy preparers. Editorial assistants and language reference assistants, who are recruited against General Service posts at the Principal level through an examination open to staff members in the General Service category, could also be considered as language staff, but their career development follows an entirely different pattern, since for them any promotion beyond the G-7 level necessarily implies passing another examination, either the competitive examination for the recruitment of the language staff mentioned above or the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category from other categories ("G to P") examination. For the purpose of the present analysis, the focus will therefore be exclusively on staff in the Professional category.

6. The first step in the career development of Professional staff members in language services is promotion to the P-3 level following two years of in-service training. In that respect, their situation compares favourably with that of staff in other professional groups, to the extent that, in most cases, staff are recruited at the P-2 level and automatically promoted to P-3 after two years of service, subject to satisfactory performance during that trial period, which only rarely is extended to three years. The fact that interpreters are recruited at the P-3 level has resulted in a marked decrease in the number of P-2 posts authorized for language services over the past few bienniums at all duty stations through upgradings or abolitions, as administratively, it is more practical to place new recruits against P-3 posts.

7. Possibilities of promotion to the P-4 level, measured by the ratio of P-4 posts to P-3 posts, provide another indicator of career prospects. A ratio equal to or exceeding one P-4 to one P-3 within the organizational unit, which

corresponds roughly to the overall ratio for regular budget posts in the entire Secretariat, is considered to be satisfactory. The situation was first reviewed at the three conference centres covered under section 1B of the budget, General Assembly affairs and conference services (A/52/6/Rev.1), and then at the smaller language units at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (which is also a United Nations conference centre) and in the regional commissions. At the three larger conference centres, the picture is mixed as indicated in table 1 below. Prima facie, it would appear that, at least for interpreters, the number of P-4 posts is adequate, with ratios of 225 per cent, 357 per cent and 433 per cent at New York, Geneva and Vienna, respectively. These high percentages point to the fact that the majority of interpreters are expected to carry out their functions at the P-4 level once they have acquired sufficient experience. However, some disparities between languages exist. The ratio of P-4 to P-5 posts is lower for the Chinese and the Russian languages as a belated consequence of the rotation system that existed for Chinese and Russian language staff until 1990–1991. Since such staff formerly left the Organization after five years of service, a number of senior posts in the corresponding interpretation sections were released to accommodate promotions of staff in the other sections. Now that the career paths are the same for all interpreters, these disparities are an anomaly and are resented by the staff concerned. It should be noted that, despite the above, the ratio of P-4 to P-3 posts exceeds 100 per cent in all cases.

8. With regard to translators, the overall ratio, although less markedly above the Secretariat average, can still be considered as acceptable. The ratios for New York, Geneva and Vienna are 128 per cent, 91 per cent and 143 per cent, respectively. In Geneva and Vienna, disparities between languages exist, both as a result of the "rotation factor" described above, which has affected the Chinese and Russian translation sections at those duty stations as well, and of the abolition of vacant posts in recent bienniums, which is reflected in ratios lower than 100 per cent in the Arabic and Spanish sections at the United Nations Office at Geneva.

9. The distribution between P-4 and P-3 posts is less favourable in the case of editors, with the notable exception of the Editorial Control Section at Headquarters. In that Section, which is responsible for the editing of most of the parliamentary documentation for the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council, there are eight P-4 posts and three P-3 posts which, here again, points to the fact that the experienced editor in that Section is expected to operate at the P-4 level. In the other editorial sections, ratios of P-4 to P-3 range between 42 per cent in the Official Records Editing Section and 50 per cent in the Editorial Control Unit in Vienna.

10. Finally, in the relatively small and highly specialized Verbatim Reporting Service and Copy Preparation Section at Headquarters, low ratios of P-4 to P-3 deny to the majority of the staff at the latter level any prospect of advancement unless they transfer to another functional group. With three P-4 posts and one P-5 post for a total of 18 Professionals, the grade pyramid for Copy Preparation is particularly unbalanced. With a P-4 to P-3 ratio of 25 per cent, the situation in the Verbatim Reporting Service is equally disturbing, however, because several reporters in that Service are doing revision work without recognition or compensation, and with remote prospects for promotion.

Table 1
Ratio of P-4 to P-3 at the three conference centres under section 1B, General Assembly affairs and conference services

Duty station/functional group	*Over 100 per cent*[a]	*50–100 per cent*	*Less than 50 per cent*
New York			
Translation	x		
Editing	x		
Official records editing			x
Interpretation	x		
Verbatim reporting			x
Copy preparation			x
Geneva			
Translation		x	
Editing			x
Interpretation	x		
Vienna			
Translation	x		
Editing		x	
Interpretation	x		

[a] The Secretariat-wide ratio of regular budget P-4 posts to P-3 posts is 105 per cent (proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 6* (A/52/6/Rev.1), part I, introduction, table 7).

11. In the smaller language units at Nairobi and in the regional commissions, an analysis based on ratios of posts at different levels would be meaningless, since the very size of the units is the determining factor for career development.

To take some extreme cases, it would be absurd to draw any conclusions for the career prospects of Arabic translators at the Economic Commission for Africa from the fact that the three posts of the corresponding Translation Unit include one P-4 and two P-3s, or to note with satisfaction that the four-post French Translation Unit at the United Nations Office at Nairobi includes three P-4 posts and one P-3. Barring a dramatic increase in the staffing tables of the language units at those duty stations, which would be hard to justify on the basis of workloads and requirements, the career development of the staff assigned to those duty stations is dependent on an efficient and fair system of assignment and reassignment between Headquarters and other duty stations, which is reviewed in paragraphs 19 to 23 below.

12. The ratio of posts at the P-5/D-1 levels within a given organizational unit is also a measure of the promotion opportunities available to its staff members. A review of such ratios in the language units at the three larger conference centres has been carried out, and the related outcome is outlined in table 2 below. As in the case of the above-mentioned review concerning P-4 posts, the main dividing line retained here is the overall ratio for regular budget posts in the entire Secretariat, namely, 26 per cent.

13. At the outset, it appears from table 2 that the ratio of 26 per cent has not been exceeded in any of the language services. It has been reached in only one case, in the Interpretation Service at Headquarters. The ratios of almost 24 per cent in the Interpretation Service at Geneva and over 19 per cent in the translation services at Headquarters could be considered close enough to 26 per cent to be rated as indicative of a reasonably satisfactory situation. It is worth noting that in all cases, the size of the units warrants their classification as services headed by a manager at the D-1 level. As a corollary, the job descriptions for the P-5 posts in those units stress varied and finely honed language skills, rather than management functions, although they may include limited supervisory roles.

14. The second group includes those units with ratios in a range of 10 to 18 per cent, which is considered as indicative of mediocre prospects of promotion to the P-5 level. The Verbatim Reporting Service, which has a ratio of 14.9 per cent, comprises six separate language sections of six to eight posts, each headed by a Chief of Section who occupies the only P-5 post for that language group. The comparatively small translation and editorial sections at the United Nations Office at Vienna follow the same pattern. On the other hand, the ratio of 15.4 per cent in the translation sections at the United Nations Office at Geneva, which altogether represent a much larger number of posts, namely, 156 for all six languages combined, has been reached because, in addition to the Chiefs, each section has several senior revisers without management responsibilities which are graded at the P-5 level.

15. A third group includes those units with ratios in a range of less than 10 per cent, which is considered indicative of poor prospects of promotion to the P-5 level. In all cases, these are classified as sections and are headed by a Chief who occupies the only P-5 post. Finally, in the smaller translation and editorial units at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and the regional commissions, the total absence of posts at the P-5 level, except those occupied by managers overseeing all conference services at those duty stations, means that all prospects of advancement to the P-5 level of any translator or editor, however competent, is contingent on a transfer to one of the three larger conference centres.

Table 2

Ratio of D-1/P-5 to overall Professional staff at the three conference centres under section 1B, General Assembly affairs and conference services

Duty station/functional group	*18–26 per cent*[a]	*10–18 per cent*	*Less than 10 per cent*
New York			
Translation	x		
Editing			x
Interpretation	x		
Verbatim reporting		x	
Copy preparation			x
Geneva			
Translation		x	
Editing			x
Interpretation	x		
Vienna			
Translation		x	
Editing		x	
Interpretation			x

[a] The Secretariat-wide ratio of regular budget P-5/D-1 posts against Professional posts from the P-2 to D-1 level is 26 per cent (proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 6* (A/52/6/Rev.1), part I, introduction, table 7).

16. It is thus apparent that the ratio of P-5/D-1 posts to the overall number of language staff at the United Nations conference centres and the ratio of P-4 to P-3 posts vary

considerably, depending on the language function and the size of the language services at the duty station considered. In the case of P-5 posts, practically all ratios are significantly lower than the statistical average for the overall Secretariat, namely, 26 per cent. Adjustments in the grade structure in some units at various duty stations appear to be fully warranted in terms of the level of the qualifications required from the incumbents. Upgradings of posts are subject to overall budgetary policy constraints, however, and difficulties are likely to subsist in smaller organizational units. Measures other than those of a budgetary nature are therefore required to enhance the career development of language staff. The four types of measures which have been considered can be outlined as follows:

(a) Facilitating transfers from one language function to the other, thus diversifying career prospects;

(b) Promoting mobility between duty stations, with a view to offering possibilities of advancement to staff located at smaller duty stations who may be at a disadvantage;

(c) Increasing training facilities for all language staff, so as to equalize chances for promotion;

(d) Undertaking a global administration of the staffing tables of the four duty stations, which would facilitate adjustments in the number and level of posts according to workload trends and staffing situations, thus reducing disparities between duty stations.

III. Possible solutions

Mobility between language functions

17. One of the difficulties encountered by language staff in the development of their careers stems from their high level of specialization, which itself limits the scope for potential career moves. For example, to date, it is unusual for an editor to switch to another written language function, such as translation, where the prospects for reaching the P-5 level are better than in editing. The reason is that the competitive examination which editors take at the start of their careers includes translation tests which are considered less stringent and comprehensive than those in the competitive examination for translators. Furthermore, in the course of the two years of the trial period, which are in fact devoted to advanced training in a given language function, opportunities to move for short periods of time to a function other than that for which the staff member was initially recruited do not exist, and as the staff member's experience in one field increases, the chances of mobility decrease.

18. In order to increase the versatility, and hence the career prospects of the staff in written language functions, an important change has been introduced in 1999 in the recruitment examination system. While, in the past, there have been separate examinations for the recruitment of translators, editors and verbatim reporters, a common examination for the three functions will take place for the first time in May 1999 for the Spanish language. The examination will have three components corresponding to the three functions, but only one overall passing mark. Recruitment from the roster will occur as and when required by the services, based on the overall ranking; given the high selectivity of the examination process, there are sufficient guarantees that successful candidates will be proficient at any of the functions. During the initial probationary period (normally two, exceptionally three years) the new recruits will receive training which will be designed so as to permit their reassignment, if warranted, based on their preference and demonstrated aptitudes. Furthermore, at periods of peak workload in either of the three services, editors, verbatim reporters or translators recruited through the common examination will be considered for reassignment to that service on a short-term basis. Finally, as they gain seniority, language staff recruited through the common exam will have the option to apply for transfers to another language service, through the normal placement procedure. Because of their broad qualifications and varied experience, their chances of being selected for a position in a different functional group will be significantly increased in comparison to the situation that has prevailed until now. It is expected that these changes in the recruitment and assignment processes will allow for more open career development for the staff in the written language functions, while providing management with more flexibility in assignments. Career prospects for staff in written language functions would also improve if they were to be offered the opportunity to train as interpreters and to sit for the interpreters examination. That kind of mobility could also increase the flexibility to assign staff to different work areas according to workload functions.

Mobility between duty stations

19. As indicated in paragraph 10 above, the career development prospects of language staff are determined to a great extent by the size of the organizational unit in which they operate. For the P-3 staff assigned to the smaller duty stations, a chance for advancement implies, in most cases,

relocation to another duty station. At the larger conference centres, such as New York, Geneva and Vienna, geographical mobility is also important for career development. For example, lateral transfers to Geneva are viewed as a desirable career move for some language staff assigned to New York. On the other hand, the comparatively lower number of P-5 posts on the staffing tables of language services at the United Nations Office at Vienna have repeatedly been cited as a cause for low morale and dissatisfaction among the staff at that duty station.

20. Staff who transfer out of a duty station have to be replaced, and difficulties have been encountered in reassigning language staff to some duty stations, particularly Nairobi and the regional commissions. Traditionally, a number of the vacancies at those duty stations have been filled through the assignment, for periods of from two to five years, of translators or editors from Headquarters who volunteer to relocate there temporarily. This empirical approach has its limitations, however, given the absence of a system of incentives and the uncertainty of reabsorption and, as a result, some junior staff have been unfairly stranded in positions with little chance of advancement, or vacancies have remained unfilled for extended periods of time.

21. A number of measures have been taken over the past years to promote mobility of language staff between duty stations. Some of them may need to be strengthened and some innovative measures are under consideration. A programme which has been in existence for many years is designed to foster exchanges of staff for periods of a few months between Headquarters, Geneva and Vienna. To the extent that peak workload periods at those duty stations do not coincide, language units experiencing peak demand for services are in a position to call on the temporary assignment of staff from another location where the permanent capacity is less strained. During their assignments to another of the three conference centres, the staff in question continue to be paid by their parent office, but travel and per diem costs are borne by the receiving office. These arrangements are made on a reciprocal basis, as the office which has received help from another during a busy period in turn releases its staff to assist the latter when a lessened workload allows it to do so. These arrangements do not affect directly advancement of the staff involved, but by broadening their experience and versatility, they increase job satisfaction and constitute an incentive for subsequent career moves involving geographical mobility.

22. In 1995, new arrangements for the assignment of translators following their recruitment were put in place, and have had a definite effect on their career development. Traditionally, after passing a competitive examination, all translators were recruited initially in New York for a two-year probationary period. It was only after completing the two years of advanced in-house training and being granted a permanent contract that some of the recruits were offered an assignment, usually for two years, at another duty station where vacancies at the P-3 level needed to be filled. For a variety of reasons, including the absence of financial incentive and the uncertainties regarding subsequent reabsorption in the corresponding translation service at Headquarters, those offers were often rejected. In 1995, a new system was set up whereby candidates for all competitive examinations are advised that, if successful, they can be appointed at any duty station in the Organization. Depending on requirements, successful candidates can therefore be immediately placed against vacant posts at offices away from Headquarters. However, these posts are loaned to conference services, Headquarters, for seven to eight months to allow for intensive training in New York of their incumbents who, upon completion of that period, proceed to their duty station. This change has had two effects: primarily, it has contributed to the prompt filling of posts at offices where the high vacancy rate was a problem, particularly at the United Nations Office at Vienna and the regional commissions. A secondary, but important, consequence is that it facilitates the rotation of translators at those duty stations, allowing for easier replacement of staff members who, after a tour of duty in the field, elect to return to Headquarters or move to another duty station for career reasons or because of personal preference.

23. In spite of these measures, cases remain where language staff, essentially translators at the P-3 level with a number of years of experience, find themselves hindered in their career development because there are no promotion prospects within their small units, and their release and integration into the corresponding translation service at Headquarters, which would offer new advancement opportunities, is delayed for lack of suitable replacements. It is in part with a view to resolving such cases that the concept of managed reassignment has been discussed. For example, language staff could be made aware in the early part of their careers of the possibility of reassignment to other duty stations for two or three years with a guarantee of being reabsorbed in their parent language service thereafter. The idea of a larger-scale reassignment scheme whereby all language staff would be rotated between Headquarters and other duty stations has been rejected, as the related administrative and relocation costs, which would be very high, would not be justified by an increase in efficiency. Contrary to what happens in other professional

groups, the experience which a language staff member might gain "in the field" does not necessarily prepare him or her for an assignment to Headquarters later on. Managed reassignment might be used only in the relatively limited number of cases where volunteers cannot be identified for temporary assignment to duty stations away from Headquarters. Discussions between the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and the Office of Human Resources Management on the feasibility of such a plan are under way.

Improving training facilities

24. In language services, as in any other professional group, training is an important factor for career development, and existing training opportunities should be maintained and ideally increased. Language and technological training develops and broadens the skills of the staff, increasing versatility and job satisfaction, and management training prepares staff for the discharge of higher responsibilities. With regard to the former, in-house facilities are available and are extensively taken advantage of. At some point in their careers, most translators, interpreters and editors attend the Secretariat language classes that provide them with the opportunity to achieve proficiency in additional passive languages, and eventually to pass the United Nations language proficiency examination in those languages. Special language courses are also available in-house for those who already have an advanced knowledge of a given language, and the Programme for the Upgrading of Substantive Skills allows some of those staff to attend summer language courses at universities in countries all over the world; France, Jordan, Russia and Spain have attracted increasing numbers of United Nations language staff over the past few years. However, financing for that very popular programme is still limited. Staff at duty stations other than Headquarters have inadequate access to external language courses and even at Headquarters, full reimbursement of tuition, travel and subsistence costs is not always granted to all participants for lack of funds. Access of language staff to information technology training has also considerably developed over the past few years, in such areas as word processing, databases and, most recently, computer-assisted translation. There again, in-house resources play a major role, supplemented as necessary by outside sources.

25. Management training for language staff needs to be strengthened. It has often been noted that, contrary to the situation that may exist in other professional groups, the advancement of many language staff from P-3 to P-5 reflects not so much increased involvement in management functions as enhanced technical skills, the effect of experience and exposure to increasingly demanding challenges in the language service in which they work. As a result, some staff may be called upon rather late in their careers to carry out the responsibilities of a manager without the benefit of prior on-the-job training. The People Management Training Programme has thus been particularly useful to managers in the language services. However, there would be distinct advantages in extending it, with some adjustments, to language staff at senior levels, mostly P-5, who do not currently discharge management responsibilities, but who should be given a chance to acquire the necessary skills to be seriously considered for managerial posts in the future.

Global administration of conference services staffing tables at all duty stations

26. The review of the staffing tables of the various language services at Headquarters and away from Headquarters and the findings drawn from it (see paras. 5–15 above) show that great disparities exist according to language functions and duty stations. While the promotion prospects of translators and interpreters in New York and Geneva can be considered reasonably satisfactory, the situation in those same functional groups at Vienna is a cause for concern. For the other types of language services, namely, editing at all duty stations and verbatim reporting and copy preparation in New York, promotion to the P-5 level and in many cases to the P-4 level represents a difficult career goal and is inaccessible to the majority of the junior staff. Finally, the small size of the language units at the smaller duty stations, Nairobi and the regional commissions further limits career development possibilities. As indicated in paragraphs 19 to 23 above, improving the mobility of staff between language functions and duty stations is one way to alleviate the problem. Another approach is more flexible administration of staffing tables at all duty stations.

27. In the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001, the responsibilities of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services includes not only language and meeting services carried out at Headquarters, but also those carried out by the conference services at the United Nations Office at Geneva and at the United Nations Office at Vienna. Accordingly, staffing tables and related financial provisions were made for all three conference centres under one section of the budget (sect. 1B, General Assembly affairs and conference services). Logically, consideration should be given at some point to the

establishment of procedures that would facilitate the transfer of posts and of staff between the conference centres under the authority of the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. Such a change would require careful study, however, given the need to recognize that administrative authority for conference services in the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Office at Vienna is shared with the respective Directors-General, and to comply with the principle recalled by the General Assembly in its resolution 53/208 B that the numbers and grade levels of staff should be commensurate with the needs of the Organization. Once established for the three conference centres, the modalities for central administration of the staffing tables for language services could be gradually extended to Nairobi and the regional commissions. Eventually, language staff at all locations would be considered part of a Secretariat-wide occupational pool within which their career development could be considerably enhanced.

IV. Conclusion

28. On the basis of the present analysis of career development problems in language services, it is possible to identify a number of actions that could be taken by the Secretariat to improve career prospects for language staff. First, it is proposed that in the context of the preparation of the 2002–2003 budget, starting in the year 2000, a comprehensive review of the grading of language posts at all duty stations be undertaken, with a view to determining those instances where a clear case for upgrading could be made, subject to overall budgetary policy. In addition, in the area of non-budgetary measures, further efforts will be made to facilitate increased mobility of language staff between functions and between duty stations. This will entail, *inter alia*, the organization of common examinations for the recruitment of English and French editors, translators and verbatim reporters in 2000, and continued consultations with the Office of Human Resources Management to consider modalities for a limited system of managed reassignment to duty stations away from Headquarters. In addition, discussions between the senior management of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and at the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Office at Vienna could be held in order to promote greater flexibility and coordination in the administration of staffing tables for language services at the three larger conference centres of the Organization.

29. Motivation of staff is probably one of the most important factors in the provision to Member States of quality services. In turn, the existence of satisfactory career development prospects is essential as an incentive for superior staff performance. Therefore, as requested by the General Assembly in paragraphs 29 and 30 of its resolution 53/208 B, increased attention will continue to be paid to career development, in line with the concerns for the enhancement of the quality of conference services expressed by the Assembly in the resolutions on pattern of conferences adopted over the past few years.